

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EB-07 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /075 W
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R 300800Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4490
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 19002

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, JA
SUBJECT: YEAR-END POLITICAL MOOD

1. EXTENDED NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAY IN JAPAN TRADITIONALLY
LEAVES NATION AND ITS OBSERVERS WITH EUPHORIC PERCEPTION
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THAT NATION'S POLITICAL PROBLEMS HAVE DISSIPATED, EVEN IF
ONLY MOMENTARILY. NEW YEAR'S 1977 IS NO EXCEPTION, BUT
CONTRARY TO MOST YEARS, WHEN POLITICAL LULL TURNS OUT
TO HAVE BEEN NO MORE THAN THAT, WE SENSE THAT COINCI-
DENCE OF DECEMBER ELECTIONS AND FORMATION OF NEW
FUKUDA CABINET HAVE MADE THIS YEAR-END MORE OF GENUINE

TURNING POINT IN POLITICAL CLIMATE THAN USUAL.

2. WHEN LOCKHEED INVESTIGATIONS BUILT UP STEAM STARTING IN FEBRUARY 1976, COMMON WISDOM HAD IT THAT SCANDAL, LIKE A RUMOR, WOULD GO AWAY IN TRADITIONAL 75 DAYS, GIVE OR TAKE A FEW WEEKS. THIS, OF COURSE, TURNED OUT TO BE FAR FROM THE CASE. AT PRESENT JUNCTURE, HOWEVER, ALMOST EVERYBODY CONCERNED FEELS THEY HAVE HAD ABOUT ENOUGH. TO EXTENT WE CAN ASSESS PUBLIC MOOD, IT SEEMS TO HOLD THAT LDP TOOK ITS PUNISHMENT IN GENERAL ELECTION AND LITTLE IS TO BE GAINED BY BELABORING LOCKHEED OR BROADER QUESTIONS OF GOVERNMENT AND BIG-BUSINESS CORRUPTION. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT FURTHER DISCLOSURES WILL FAIL TO REVIVE MEDIA AND PUBLIC INTEREST, OR THAT OPPOSITION PARTIES WOULD NOT PURSUE ANY NEW LEADS OR NEW SCANDALS -- THERE IS MUCH SPECULATION ABOUT WHETHER THE TWIN SPECTRES OF BOEING OPERATIONS ABROAD AND KCIA MACHINATIONS WILL HAUNT JAPAN IN 1977. SHOULD THEY DO SO, AND PARTICULARLY SHOULD THEY AFFECT MEMBERS OF NEW TEAM, CONSEQUENCES COULD BE FAR-REACHING. BUT UNLESS THEY DO, BURDEN SEEMS TO BE ON LDP TO GET ON WITH NATION'S BUSINESS, PRINCIPALLY ECONOMIC, WHILE PUTTING ITS OWN HOUSE IN ORDER.

3. INCENTIVES FOR LDP ARE CONSIDERABLE. ELECTION SET-BACK CAME AS REAL SHOCK TO ALL FACTIONS. WHILE A GOOD DEAL OF BACKBITING PERSISTS ON PART OF BOTH MIKI FACTION AND ANTI-MIKI COALITION AS TO HOW OUTCOME COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED, AT THIS JUNCTURE OVERRIDING CONCERN IS TO REUNIFY PARTY SO AS TO CONFIRM IMPRESSION
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THAT ONLY LDP IS CAPABLE OF GOVERNING JAPAN AND REPRESENTING IT IN WORLD FORUMS. UPPER HOUSE ELECTIONS IN

JUNE WOULD HAVE PRESENTED FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE FOR LDP IN ANY EVENT, WITH BETTER THAN EVEN CHANCE PARTY WILL LOSE ITS MAJORITY, BUT AGAINST BACKGROUND OF LOWER HOUSE ELECTION RESULTS CONCERN OF PARTY LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN COMPOUNDED. WHILE FUKUDA CAN BE EXPECTED ACTIVELY TO ASSERT LEADERSHIP OF HIS CABINET -- HE WILL BE UNIMPEDED BY PRESENCE OF OTHER FACTIONAL LEADERS -- WE ALSO ANTICIPATE THAT TACTICS EVIDENT IN FIRST DAYS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION OF CONCILIATION AND STUDIED EFFORT TO APPEAR RESPONSIBLE IN RELATIONS WITH OPPOSITION AS WELL AS WITH OWN PARTY WILL PERSIST IN WEEKS AHEAD. IN PRACTICAL TERMS THIS COULD MEAN AVOIDANCE OF SHOWDOWNS ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES, AND PERHAPS MORE THAN LIP SERVICE TO

WILLINGNESS TO ENTERTAIN OPPOSITION PROPOSALS FOR
COMPROMISE. DESIRE TO AVOID CONFLICT ON DOMESTIC FRONT
MAY BE ADDITIONAL STIMULUS FOR FUKUDA TO SEEK INITIATIVES
ON INTERNATIONAL SCENE THAT MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO ACCRUE
LARGE MEASURE OF POPULAR SUPPORT -- LIKELY CANDIDATES
ARE RENEWED EFFORT TO REACH AGREEMENT ON PEACE TREATY
WITH PRC AND POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD EARLY ADVANCED-
NATION SUMMIT.

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4. OPPOSITION PARTIES FIND THEMSELVES IN SOMEWHAT
UNEASY POSITION OF ENHANCED INFLUENCE. IT IS NOT IN
NATURE OF SOCIALISTS (JSP) TO AVOID TROUBLE, BUT THEY
ARE CONSTRAINED BY NEW-FOUND SUCCESS OF MORE MODERATE
OPPOSITION FORCES, I.E., KOMEITO, DEMOCRATIC

SOCIALISTS (DSP) AND NEW LIBERAL CLUB (NLC), WHICH
APPEAR TO HAVE STRUCK RESPONSIVE CORD WITH ELECTORATE.
FUNDAMENTAL DILEMMA JSP WILL FACE AS MAJOR
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OPPOSITION PARTY IS WHETHER, DESPITE PREVAILING MOOD
OF MODERATION, IT SHOULD ASSUME MORE RADICAL POSTURE
IN ORDER TO REESTABLISH ITSELF AS PARTY WITH DISTINCTIVE POLITICAL
COLORATION, OR WHETHER IT SHOULD EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES
OF OPPOSITION COALITION. IN PRACTICE IT IS LIKELY TO
TACK IN BOTH DIRECTIONS: STRIKE INTERMITTENT MILITARNT
JPOSES ON ISSUES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN, E.G., RIGHT TO

STRIKE, BUT AVOID PROLONGED PARLIAMENTARY H

UCTIONISM

THAT WOULD LABEL PARTY AS UNRECONSTRUCTED.

5. IF ELECTION SHOCKED LDP, IT PROBABLY EQUALLY
SHOCKED ALL PARTI OF LEFT WING, WHICH REALIZED IT
WAS AS ILL-PREPARED AS EVER TO OFFER NATION ALTERNATIVE
LEADERSHIP, AND THAT EVEN IF LDP HAD LOST ITS MAJORITY,
JAPAN WAS YEARS FROM POINT WHERE ANYTHING SHORT OF
LDP-DOMINATED ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE IN POSITION TO
GOVERN. WHILE MUCH WILL DEPEND ON UNFORESEEN EVENTS,
WE WOULD GUESS THAT MONTHS AHEAD WILL SEE ALL OPPOSITION
PARTIES, INCLUDING JSP, VIE WITH EACH OTHER IN TAKING
"RESPONSIBLE" POSTURES. WE WILL ALSO SEE MUCH
COMING AND GOING BETWEEN THE OPPOSITION PARTIES, BUT
WE DOUBT WHETHER THE END-PRODUCT WILL GO MUCH BEYOND
HIGH-SOUNDING AGREEMENTS FOR TACTICAL COOPERATION IN
DIET, AND LIMITED ARRANGEMENTS TO WORK TOGETHER IN
PARTICULAR ELECTION SITUATIONS.

6. ON BALANCE THEN, WE BELIEVE THAT EVEN AFTER JAPAN
RETURNS TO WORK NEXT YEAR, ALMOST ALL POLITICAL CIRCLES
AS WELL AS PUBLIC WILL BE PREDISPOSED TO A PERIOD OF
RELATIVE POLITICAL CALM, WITH ATTENTION BEING FOCUSED
ON BUDGET DEBATE AND MEASURES DESIGNED TO STEP UP
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY. SHOULD LOCKHEED-LIKE DEVELOPMENTS
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OCCUR, THE POLITICAL WATERS WILL QUICKLY BECOME ROILED
ONCE MORE, BUT NO DESIRE TO SEE THIS HAPPEN IS
EVIDENT.

HODGSON

NOTE BY OC/T: PARAGRAPH 4. AS RECEIVED. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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